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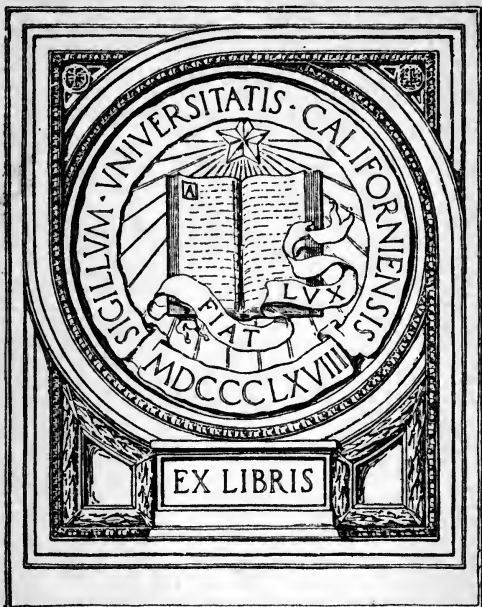


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THE DRUMS
IN OUR
STREET

MARY
CAROL
MAY

GIFT OF
Class of 1900



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MARY CARLYN DAVIES, former student at University of California, who has won Morgenthau poetry prize. She is a poet and novelist.





THE DRUMS IN OUR STREET



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
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THE DRUMS IN OUR STREET

A Book of War Poems

BY

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES



New York

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1918

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Class of 1900

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To

MY THREE BROTHERS

SERGEANT A. H. DAVIES

COMPANY E, 4TH BATTALION, 20TH ENGINEERS, A.E.F.

SERGEANT S. L. DAVIES

COMPANY D, 6TH BATTALION, 20TH ENGINEERS, A.E.F.

SERGEANT L. L. DAVIES

BASE HOSPITAL 46, A.E.F.

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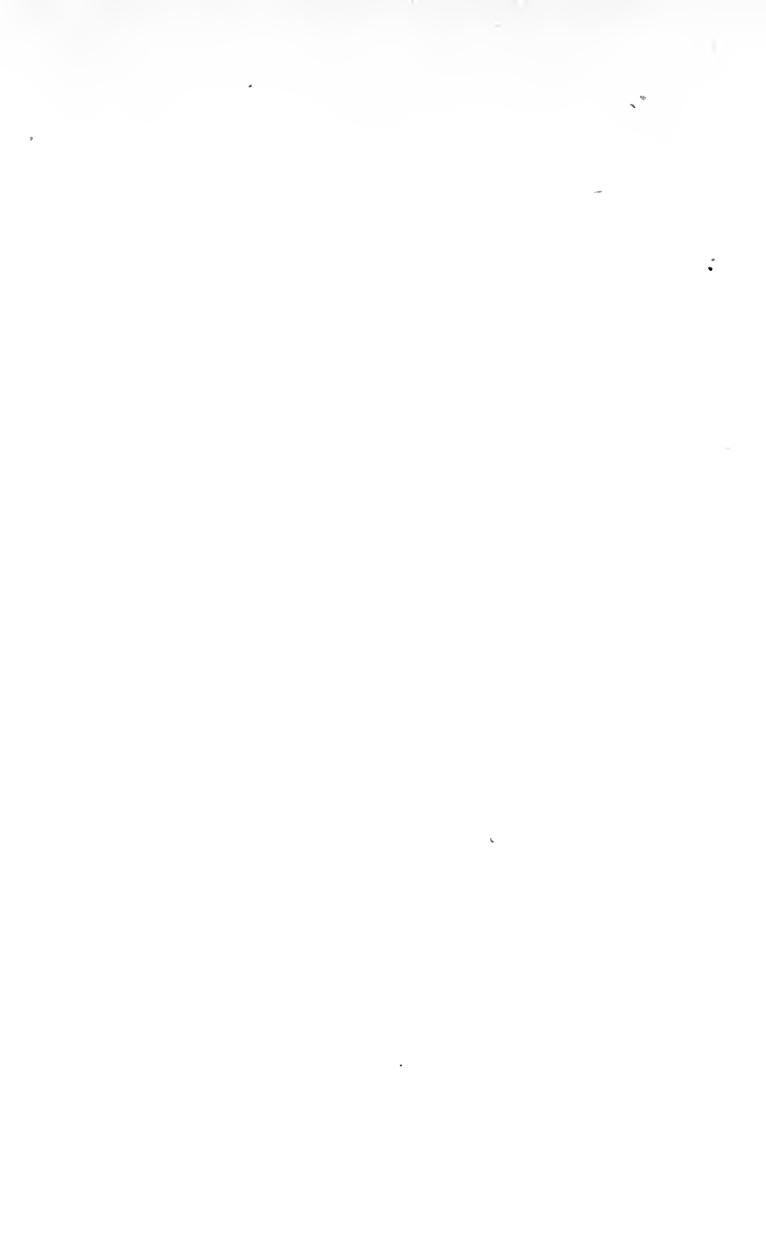
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PART I

THE DRUMS IN OUR STREET

THE BLOOD-STAINED CROSS

(From a rosary found on the body of a poilu killed at the
battle of Festubert.)

A BLACK cross and a bloody
With a small Christ on a tree,
A black cross and a bloody
From a dead man's rosary,
To count no Ave Marys
To say no prayers by rote
A black cross and a bloody
I wear upon my throat;

A black cross and a bloody
I wear upon a chain

The Drums in Our Street

To keep in this my body -
Still, still, his body's pain;
A black cross and a bloody
To let me not again
Sleep satisfied or calm until
A murderer be slain.

The young dead man had stiffened.
His fingers held from harm
In wooden clasp the cross that now
Upon my throat is warm.
About him fell my kinsmen;
The foe they could not stem;
And since I have no token
I keep this cross for them.

Blackcrusted blood makes holy
The black cross at my throat.

The Drums in Our Street

And to the Christ upon it
I say no prayers by rote :
Kind prayers I have forgotten,
The little prayers of peace --
Until a death be compassed
I have not time for these.

Until his death be compassed
Who slew my kin, I keep
The little cross upon me
To tell me, in my sleep,
Even in dreams, to strengthen
My arm to join my blow
With others to bring death to him
Who laid my kinsmen low.

I wear the black cross that has been
In a dead man's hand. I dedicate

The Drums in Our Street

My life, my power, my strength, my hate
To this : For what his deeds have been
To slay the one who slew my kin.

BEAUTY AND JOY ARE KIN TO ME
AND YOUTH. WAR SLEW THEM UTTERLY.

THE DRUMS ARE ECHOING IN OUR STREET

The drums are echoing in our street.
Each has heard the music sweet:
Jones, and Lena, and her three
Boys; and Mrs. Rafferty.

The drums are echoing in our street.
They change each life, as on they beat.
And Ruth has heard them, Glen, and Guy,
And Mrs. Henderson — and I.

AMERICA 1917-1918

A nation goes adventuring!
With new and shining mail
A nation goes adventuring
To seek the Holy Grail.

A nation leaves its money-bags,
Its fireside safe and warm,
To ride about the windy world
And keep the weak from harm.

A nation goes adventuring,
With heart that will not quail,
God grant it, on some hard-won dawn,
Sight of the Holy Grail.

PEACE

When all the war is made and done,
And in our town I stand once more,
From other homes I'll seek out one
And knock upon its door.

And I will wait there patiently
Until I hear your step, and then
As the worn door swings back, will see
Your face look out again.

And that is all peace means to me —
Some day to walk up past the store,
And past the corner chestnut tree,
And knock upon your door.

ON LEAVE IN A STRANGE LITTLE TOWN

On leave in a strange little town,
Soldiers and sailors are chaffing —
With eyes deep and still, faces brown,
Are filling the streets and laughing.

Free from the trenches' smother,
And their deafening days and nights,
Some are kissing a happy mother,
Some only stare at the sights.

More and more they come crowding
Till the streets seem full of blue,
Khaki and blue; tired sailors,
Soldiers whose leave is due.

The Drums in Our Street

For the marching and shooting and drill-
ing

Each has received his pay.

After the hating and killing

The men are on leave today;

Their songs ringing sweet and free,

Their laughter sounding bold —

On leave in a strange little town

Whose streets are of gold.

SOLDIER LOVE

Soldier love's a wild love, and soldier love's
a glad,

And that is the love he gives to me. — And
the love that I give my lad

Is a keen love and a swift love and a gay
love and a blind.

Time enough for weeping when I am left
behind.

Time enough for weeping and counting
motives then,

When the feet of my lad have fallen in step
with the feet of the marching men.

It's the soldier love that he gives me, the
desperate, reckless sort

The Drums in Our Street

Which comes of knowing that death's abroad
and may gather one in for sport.

Soldier love's a strange love, that only has
today.

Lean, then, from the saddle, and kiss and
ride away!

Now the world is dying, with blood its ways
are wet,

Soldier love's the only love that any lass
may get.

A BOY SOLDIER'S PRAYER

God, I have the excitement here,
The thrill, and all the peasants cheering
And crowding in from far and near
— She has the silence and her fearing.

And I have youth to make the most
Of this adventure. She is old.
Each perilous hour of mine's a ghost
That haunts her with its news untold.

We only give ourselves, and we
Have songs and drums to keep it high,
Our courage. But the mothers see
Their children go to live or die.

And soon I'll have the trenches, and
The men, the banter and the jesting;

The Drums in Our Street

The joy I'll hardly understand
Of perilous, wondrous questing.]

The search for something great in life,
Some heroism in my soul,
Even in the mud, the noise of strife
There in our crowded hole.

God, don't mind me, I ask of you,
I've all the comrades, and the lark;
And men, beside me, coming too,
If I must go into the Dark.

* * * * *

But in a house back from the street,
Where honeysuckles with their stir
Make the yard Spring; you'll find a sweet
Tired woman. God, be good to her.

“JOAN, WHO LEADS THE SOLDIERS”

Joan, who leads the soldiers, listen to a
prayer;

Joan, who heartens fighting men; and
makes them bold to dare,

When the word is given, side by side, as
soldiers may,

All the rain of hate and hell because you
lead the way —

You were once a little maid, in the Spring
you had

Pleasure in the bashful words of some
comely lad.

The Drums in Our Street

If you have not quite forgot, lend a listening ear;

Joan of blessed memory, bend to me and hear.

Where the tallest men of all, where the bravest stand,

You will see a stalwart youth, firm of eye and hand:

(Joan, who leads the soldiers, listen to a maid!)

You will know him by his eyes, that are not afraid,

You will know him by his mouth, that is laughing still.

— When from out the angry sky singing missiles spill,

The Drums in Our Street

You that lead the soldiers, hold your blessed
arm

Before the face of my own lad, and keep
him safe from harm.

IN OUR STREET

The war has wakened me to see
The greatness in the clerk across the way,
The high nobility
In my next neighbor whom I never saw
With anything of awe
Until I knew her sons had gone — three
 tall
And awkward youths. She sings about
 the hall
And porch, at sweeping, and is happier
Than all the town. I sometimes look at her
And wonder, and wish that I, too, could be
 gay.

The lanky clerk who never seemed to care
About big things — he went. There was an air

The Drums in Our Street

Of being on great projects, in his face,
A trace
Of kingliness I'd not have thought of there.
There were songs within him, though his
lips were dumb.

Because of these two, I,
Though I am cowardly, try
To keep from weeping when no letters
come —

AT WIPERS AND CALVARY

The boy who was first to die
For the cause they are fighting for
Links his arm and walks with the lads
Who are going to die in the war.

He bled in agony
A very long time ago.
Now they greet him comradely,
With eyes that newly know.

They are brothers-in-arms in the old,
Old war that is never done;
So with him they jest, as they march and
rest,
In the snow and the mud and the sun,

The Drums in Our Street

With the boy who was first to die

In the fight to make men free.

— For it matters little where one goes out

At Wipers or Calvary.

A CASUALTY LIST

There was always waiting in our mother's
eyes,
Anxiety and wonder and surmise,
Through the long days, and in the longer,
slow,
Still afternoons, that seemed to never go,
And in the evenings, when she used to sit
And listen to our casual talk, and knit.
And when the day was dark and rainy, and
Not fit to be abroad in, she would stand
Beside the window, and peer out and shiver,
As small sleek raindrops joined to make a
river
That rushed, tempestuous, down the window
pane,

The Drums in Our Street

And say, "I wonder what they do in rain?
Is it wet there in the trenches, do you
think?"

And she would wonder if he had his ink
And razor blades and toothpaste that she
sent;

And if he read much in his Testament,
Or clean forgot, some mornings, as boys
will.

But always the one wonder in her eyes
Was, "Is he living, living, living, still
Alive and gay? Or lying dead somewhere
Out on the ground, and will they find him
there?"

She closed her lids each night upon that
look

Of waiting, as a hand might close a book
But never change the words that were
within.

The Drums in Our Street

And when the morning noises would begin
A new day, and a young sun touched the
 skies,

Again she woke with waiting in her eyes.

But that is over now. She does not read
The lists of casualties, since that one came

A week or two ago. There is no need.

She's making sweaters now for other men

And knitting just as carefully as then.

There is no change, except that as she plies

Her needles, swift and rhythmic as before,

There is no waiting in our mother's eyes,

Anxiety or wonder any more.

THE NEW PLAYFELLOW

When we were six and seven,
 What games we used to know!
What stern adventures centered
 Round an arrow and a bow,
Round sticks and stilts and marbles!
 And, oh, the pride we knew,
We girls who were admitted
 Into the scornful crew

Of crimson-turbaned pirates!
 What loyalty our clan
Acknowledged to the leader
 And to each maid and man!
A league against the grown-ups,
 Our kingdom we'd defend,

The Drums in Our Street

The little land of make-believe,
Beyond the rainbow's end.

When childhood's game was finished,
Still in our little street

When Spring came in, how often
We used to laugh and meet

While dusk turned green to blackness,
And blotted out the blue.

— (It's Spring! The blind would know it,
The air's so soft and new.)

But I am very lonely.

The moon goes up the hill
And yet the street that echoed

Is newly, strangely, still;

For, in a foreign country,

(O scent of lilac breath!),

The boys I used to play with
Are playing now with Death.

EVAN

The war is not in Europe. No. It's here
In our parlor, underneath the chandelier
Where Evan used to sit, and hold his head
Within his hands, a problem there before
him —

He couldn't make the thing come right, he
said.

It was natural to watch him studying there.

There's no one sitting now in Evan's chair;
It's curious not to see that shock of hair
And those hunched shoulders. No, he isn't
dead,
At least, we haven't heard so yet; he's
only

The Drums in Our Street

Across there, with the Engineers, and writes
Often enough. We read them here at
nights,

The letters, and the natural, commonplace
Smudged sentences make changes in each
face.

'Twould be ingratitude to say we're lonely :
We've all the girls here yet, and they are
good

And gentle, doing calmly, as they should,
The chores of living. And we've all we
need,

Or maybe more, to eat and wear and read.

We have each other and the girls. Then
he

Likes the excitement there, he writes, and
we

The Drums in Our Street

Must not feel worried, for he's fine and fit,
And proud to be out there and do his bit.
It's strange that I should mind, should fret
or fear —
Or feel the war is not in France, but here —

WAR

We'd not have had the grit to be in love
Had not war given a shove
To our slow cautiousness, and made us
know

That there is no tomorrow anywhere —
That those who care
Should not take chances so.

And so we married and you went away
To fight. And I am glad we didn't wait.
How queer it is to think it should be hate
And bitterness, that gave the shove
That pushed us into love.

A WAR WEDDING

My life is made of five long nights
And five swift days, like birds whose flights
Have taken them to where the earth
Below them, is a small, strange thing
Of very little worth.

My life is made of five bright days
And five kind nights. I heard you praise

My beauty, in your faint, hushed tone
That no one else has ever heard.
And this is all I own.

Five nights and five strange days, and then
You died to save your fellow-men.

I never lived until I saw
Within your eyes that thirst and awe.

And I shall never live again.

SPRING SOWS HER SEEDS

Why are you doing it this year, Spring?
Why do you do this useless thing?

Do you not know there are no men now?
Why do you put on an apple bough
Buds, and in a girl's heart, thronging
Strange emotions: fear, and longing,

Eager flight, and shy pursuing,
Noble thoughts for her undoing;

Wondering, accepting, straining,
Wistful seizing, and refraining;

Stern denying, answering?
— Why do you toil so drolly, Spring?

The Drums in Our Street

Why do you scheme and urge and plan
To make a girl's heart ripe for a man,

While the men are herded together where
Death is the woman with whom they pair?

Back fall my words to my listening ear.
Spring is deaf, and she cannot hear.

Spring is blind, and she cannot see.
She does not know what war may be.

Spring goes by, with her age-old sowing
Of seeds in each girl's heart; kind, un-
knowing.

And, too, in *my* heart, (Spring, oh, heed!)
Now in my own has fallen a seed.

(Spring, give over!) I cringe, afraid.
(Though I suffer, harm no other maid!)

The Drums in Our Street

I hide my eyes, a budding tree
Is so terrible to see.

I stop my ears, a bird song clear
Is a dreadful thing to hear.

Seeds in each girl's heart she goes throwing.
Oh, the crop of pain that is growing!

SMITH, OF THE THIRD OREGON,
DIES

“Autumn in Oregon is wet as Spring,
And green, with little singings in the grass,
And pheasants flying,
Gold, green and red,
Great, narrow, lovely things,
As if an orchid had snatched wings.

There are strange birds like blots against a sky
Where a sun is dying.

Beyond the river where the hills are blurred
A cloud, like the one word
Of the too-silent sky, stirs, and there stand
Black trees on either hand.

Autumn in Oregon is wet and new
As spring,

The Drums in Our Street

And puts a fever like Spring's, in the cheek
That once has touched her dew —
And it puts longing too
In eyes that once have seen
Her season-flouting green,
 And ears that listened to her strange birds
 speak.

“Autumn in Oregon — I'll never see
Those hills again, a blur of blue and rain
Across the old Willamette. I'll not stir
A pheasant as I walk, and hear it whirr
 Above my head, an indolent, trusting
 thing.

When all this silly dream is finished here,
The fellows will go home, to where there
 fall
Rose-petals over every street, and all
The year is like a friendly festival.

The Drums in Our Street

But I shall never watch those hedges drip
Color, nor see the tall spar of a ship

In our old harbor. — They say that I am
dying,

Perhaps that's why it all comes back again;
Autumn in Oregon, and pheasants flying — ”

THE MOVIES IN FRANCE

You give me home: the pepper trees
Shaking a little in the breeze,
And rows of swaying palms — I close
My eyes before I look at those,
Like praying before food. The high
Great palms like swords against the sky,
The drooping ones that curve and bend,
Are each to homesick eyes, a friend.
The great gray hills of home I see
Before me lie alluringly,
And sunny towns, like those I know.
Familiar buildings, row on row,
A house in shining cool concrete
Like one that stands across the street
From ours, at home! The acacia stirred
The old way then. My eyes are blurred.

The Drums in Our Street

The tale? I do not care or know
What girl and lover come and go
Beneath those trees, upon those hills
What kiss enthralls, or murder thrills
The rest to grieving or delight
— For I am home, am home to-night!



YOUNG DEATH

Men always said that Death was old,
A slow, bent man with wrinkled hand
Who with a shining sickle, stern and cold
Went reaping through the land.

But now we have learned bitterly
They only spoke with ignorant tongue.
This year has touched our eyes and now we
see
That Death is fair and young.

With other drilling lads he stands
Shoulder to shoulder in the street,
As stern his mouth as theirs, as quick his
hands,
As eager his young feet.

The Drums in Our Street

Above their heads there hang the prayers
Of mothers. Boyish hearts beat bold.
Ah, hardly can we tell his face from
theirs. . . .

Would God that Death were old!

SCHOOLMATES

He came a thousand miles to spend an hour
With me before his unit went to France.

I saw that he was changed in that first
glance.

This boy whom I had known at college
had

A different look — not sad,

But thoughtful. There was not the old-
time fear

Of folks, but he was shyer, even so,

Than I remembered him a year ago.

His eyes were very clear

I think from being

The long days in the open;

From early sleep, perhaps from early rising,

The Drums in Our Street

And then from seeing
That young recruit so near,
The gay lad, Death, who marches with the
men.

“I’m very glad you came,” I said, and
then

Asked after the old crowd. “A score or
more

Are killed. Dick’s in the aviation corps.
And Roger’s flying. Freckles had flat feet
And Bud was under weight.” It was a
treat

To hear the way he cussed out every one.

“I haven’t heard from Tom for everso.

And Tuttle married that Miss Marsh, you
know.”

And then he told me of their food, a jest
About a sergeant — and that he liked best

The Drums in Our Street

Of all, the feeling that one was part, at
last,
After one's puny life, of something vast.

But when the hour was up, we said good-by
And shook hands, friendlywise, and then he
stooped

And kissed me once, as very hungry men
Can seize at food, and then he crushed his
small

Cap in his hands, and, head down, blind,
pellmell

Groped for the open door and somehow
went.

Now Spring is here, and streams and leaf-
buds swell

. . . I never knew before what April meant.

THE DEAD SON

In an old country,
Far and far away,
A woman went a-weeping
On a fresh Spring day.

A woman went a-weeping,
For she heard birds singing,
And under the hill
There was new grass springing.

“He loved the new grass,
And all the birds,” she said;
“He loved the sparrows,
And threw them bread.”

The Drums in Our Street

(Spring in the bush and tree,
In her heart pain),
She wept for her young lad
By bloody hands slain.

She wept for her son
Who had harmed no man,
Who must die for the dark world,
Fulfilling an old plan.

She was but a woman,
And what could she know
Of God's wise weavings?
"That he should have to go!

"My lad, whom I needed,
Whom I love, night and day!"
She said. And the birds sang
And all the world was gay.

The Drums in Our Street

To know that he waited
In God's own town
Was little comfort to her.
Slowly down

The road to the village,
With her sobs to smother,
All on a Spring day
Went Mary, His mother.

* * * * *

Now o'er a dark world
War holds sway,
And there is sound of sobbing,
This fresh Spring day.

To all weeping mothers
She bends low;
She stretches out her hands to them,
And says, "I know."

SOUNDS

When Ypres burned, I watched the cloud
That glowed above, and hung,
Pierced from the flaming towns below
By hungry tongue.

There must have been — I have forgot —
The booming sound of war —
*I never knew a nightingale
Could sing so clear before.*

“HIGHLANDERS, FIX BAYONETS”

His mother never liked that record played.
He liked it, Don, he always seemed to be
Putting that record on, and listening
As if there were some one whispering at his
 shoulder,

Standing there, slyly whispering, in his ear
While the record whirred and the song
 filled all the room.

And after the sound ceased, he still would
 stand,

The sunlight on his yellow hair, and dream
As lads do; and then set the needle and
Hear the whole record thunder through
 once more.

It was a gallant-sounding thing, that one,

The Drums in Our Street

And though I am an old man and should
be
Leaving such things to my grandchildren now,
I liked the manly sound of it myself.

“Listen, grandfather,” he would say, his
voice
Was changing that last summer. We would
wait.
A whirring sound came first; and then the
sharp
Command rang out, in a clear, rousing
tone
Startling, as if upon a battlefield
A harsh commander gave his men the word.
“Highlanders, fix bayonets!” — And then
a hush,
And after that the song:

The Drums in Our Street -

A loud, full-throated, wondrous fighting-
song,

Line after line of hurrying words to put
New fury into tired fighting-men.

“Terror of death in that blinding run —”

Yes, but if there was blood, too, in the song,
And lust of shedding it, why, that’s what
war is;

It can’t be helped. I always told her that.

“Look to the shields of the conquering foe,
Crouching again for another blow!
But see the rush of a hundred clans!
Fight as you did at Preston Pans—
Highlanders, fix bayonets!”

I could see
The thrill go running through Don at the
words.

He always seemed to like that record played.

The Drums in Our Street

She didn't, though, but womenfolk are queer.
She shuddered when the thirsty words
sprang out.

She seemed to see the battlefield, the men
Running to thrust their bayonets through
the bodies
Of other laughing, swaying, shouting men,
She told me. They've too much imagination,
Women.

She'd watch that bright-haired laddie
stand,
A sort of premonition in her eyes,
A fear, the kind of fear that Mary might
Have had, once, watching the young Christ
at play.
They are a strange race, mothers, so unlike
The rest of all us common folks that we
Can only stand aside and wonder at them.

The Drums in Our Street

She used to ask the boy for other songs
Half guessing at the names, not really caring
What record was put on, if only that one
Would be forgotten for a little while.

If she were ever in the other room
And heard the strident bars of it beginning,
That curious look would come into her
face;
Her hands would fumble at the kitchen
work;
And, if she had been speaking to a neigh-
bor,
Her words would slacken and repeat them-
selves,
Until the record stopped, and she was freed.
And when the stern command rang out,
each time

The Drums in Our Street

She cringed, as if some general had spoken
Aloud there in her well-kept house, and
brought
His war into her quiet, sunny kitchen.

But when war really broke, and he came
asking,
With all his bright youth burning in his
eyes
To a flame that made her own eyes blind
to see,
Proud through her frightened tears, she was
the first
Of all the stricken mothers in our town
To say, "Yes, go, my boy, and God go
too,
And keep you brave and trusty at your
post,

The Drums in Our Street

And keep you safe for me to hold again
When we have done our duty, and have
brought
Peace back to this poor world." And till
he went
She never faltered, but her head was high,
Her hands were busy for him. When he
said
"Good-by" the last day, at our little
station,
She laughed out as she kissed him, smiling
still
Until his train was hidden by the bend.

She kept her courage through the heavy
months;
And when no letters came, she was the one
To find new reasons for each fresh delay.

The Drums in Our Street

She kept her courage when the message
came,

The wire from Washington, that he was
killed.

And when we saw his full name in the
long

Pitiful roll of honor of the dead,

—I mind his name came halfway down
the list,

It was between a Shehan and a Shultz,

With “Killed in Action” written over all,

“He did his duty to the end,” she said,

“There is no prouder death than this of
his;

He died to make the countries all more
safe

For women and children, like the lad he
was,

Thoughtful of others weaker than himself.”

The Drums in Our Street

And that was all she said, but afterward,
With frightened sobbing catching at her
 breath,
She broke the shining record into bits.

And I have never heard it played again.
But sometimes, when we've music of an
 evening
I vaguely wish, among the softer strains
Of this one's waltz, or that one's minuet
That I could hear once more the thundering
 swell,
The strong, harsh, sudden vigor of that
 song.

There was something in its swing to stir
 men's blood.
I liked the manly sound of it myself.

“LET’S PRETEND”

I name my brothers in a prayer,
Who are upon the sea,
Lynn with brown and tumbled hair
Lloyd and Deak, the three.
O the days we whittled boats
And sailed them on the sea!

The sea was running past our door,
A mountain brook and clear,
And little bays we scooped and shaped
To keep our fleets from fear.
Each bay we named; each ship we named,
And launched it with a cheer.

O little whittled boats that went
So slowly round the bend!

The Drums in Our Street

O happy days of make-believe!

— When will this anguish end?

Tears in my eyes? I am not now

So good at “Let’s Pretend.”

FOR A YOUNG SOLDIER

He laughed and died ;
And something died to me
In greening countryside,
In grass and bud and tree.
Color died from the world,
And all the sky was dim ;
And something in each soul
I meet, died, too, with him.

IN A MIRROR

My eyes are very blue tonight
And very big with questioning;
For love has come to me, that bright
And unapproachable strange thing
That touches unsuspecting men
And heedless maids: and not again
Shall the old childish laughter go
Leaping from mouth to eyes and sit
There like a child that mischievous
Climbs triumphing to a perch and will
Not be dislodged, though hard one tries.

No laughter now is in my eyes.
My mouth has other things to know

The Drums in Our Street

Than childish games, and secret places
Where the first, long, wood violets grow.
My face is like all women's faces
Not like a girl's face any more :
There are more shadows in it, and
It is soft, vague, like a new land
With rain mists over, the outline
Not sharp, as if the day were fine.

To other maids, in other days
Love came not in so strange a guise,
So sudden and so perilous ;
For in the moment that we know
The harbor of each other's eyes
War calls, and you must go, must go :
And after, I know well, strange new
Fears, wishes, hopes will hurry through
My thinking while I wait for you.
I had not dreamed it would be so

The Drums in Our Street

That love would come, but still, today,
Like one who hardly understands,
I welcome, in the same warm way,
This love, that holds death in its hands.

*My eyes are very blue tonight
And very big with questioning;
For love has come to me, that bright
And unapproachable strange thing.*

PURGED BY WAR

We have put by our littleness :

 Envy and malice form no more

The greater part of all that mass

 That our hearts have in store.

The spiteful whisperings fall and cease ;

 Our petty quarrels are dropped and lost.

We have put by our littleness,

— But oh, at what a cost !

ON A TROOP TRAIN

In through the train window comes the
scent of sagebrush;

And I remember riding out with you —
Sagebrush, sagebrush, violet and purple,
Gray under noon sun, and silver under
dew.

Riding out together down the gold arroyo,
Riding to the rim-rock, climbing up a
trail,
Riding when the sunset is pricking out the
river;

Far from ranch or bunk-house, or any
friendly hail.

The Drums in Our Street

Have you forgotten all our rides together,
Creaking leather, clinking spurs, range
sky blue,
Startled rabbits flashing across the trail
before us —
Would sudden scent of sagebrush mean
anything to you?

THE GREAT WAR

Youth, crucified to save the world,
Hangs on the cross, and to the sky
Utters, while thunderbolts are hurled,
A fearful cry.
Who has betrayed him? Each one asks,
Low, "Is it I?"

FIRE OF THE SUN

Passionate children of the sun —
You are one and I am one.
A piece of his fire burns still in you;
And in me, too.

Lower your lids and veil your eyes.
Let us pretend that we are wise,
That we are very wise, and that you
Can smother that fire, and that I can, too.

Let us forget that we are young,
And have wanting in us. Let us go
Walking cautiously and slow
All these folk among.

The Drums in Our Street

(Fire of the sun, smother, smoulder!)
Let us pretend that we are older;
And that we are calm, and do not know.
(Fire of the sun, burn low!)

Let us laugh and let us sing,
That will be a pleasant thing.

Let us look at life, and weigh,
And scrutinize it well, and say,
“We think we will not buy today.”

* * * * *

But war, war, war!—
Let us flame now before
It quenches us. Let us flame high
Ere it is on us; you and I!

IF HE CAME NOW

If he came now!

My heart would be like a once quiet street,
Hung with gay lanterns on a fête night, wild
With singing! And my heart would be a
child

Sleepily waking to a kiss, then, flinging
Sleep from it, springing
With all too ready feet,
Out of the night, into the world again
And finding that its toys were all once more
There where it left them, waiting on the
floor

To be played with again. My heart would
be

An opened book filled full with witchery,

The Drums in Our Street

Filled, too, with pain,
An opened book that had been left too long
Upon a dusty shelf. It would be a song
In a young mouth. And it would be buds,
too,
Opening under the moon, and shivering at
the dew,
But liking it. And it would be a flame,
Red in the night. I used to be glad when
he came,
But not so very glad — because I thought
That I would always have him. . . . Then
war caught
Him from me suddenly, and bore him out
To be where danger is; and killed my
doubt,
My hesitation and half fears. Ah, how
I would run to welcome him, if he came
now!

THE CHINQUAPIN TRAIL

Thimbleberry, salmonberry, mountain ash
and chinquapin,

Hard-hack, black cap, elderberry blue,
Blackberry, huckleberry, rhododendron,
sword fern,

Wooly manzanita — To be riding through
The heavy brush about the trail, at dusk
once more!

When all the gold is spilling on the sky's
wide floor!

Indian plum and squaw grass, paint brush
and mountain balm,

Dwarf maple, buck brush, once so com-
monplace!

Spiræa and syringa, chaparral and hazel,

The Drums in Our Street

Maple leaves that tremble, and the great
black trace

Of a fir across the sky, and, quick as fear
Drops the dark upon the trail. . . . And
now I'm here —

Far from whisk of chipmunk or rush of
furry gray-squirrel,
Chinquapin and squaw grass are a half
a world away!

The sun goes down on No Man's Land,
and dusk is on the trenches,
And there's never a cow pony, at the end
of day,

To go with down the cañon, with the
mountain shrubs around me.

But some day I'll go back and ride, and
greet them all:

Chinquapin and squaw grass and grape and
chaparral!

ON AN OLD BATTLEFIELD

Two foes who slew
Each other, lay
In slow decay;
From them there grew
This poppy which I pluck today.
Here where I keep a rendezvous
With you
The hatred of two men
Leads round to love again.

All hate
To love leads, soon or late.

THE RECRUITING STATION AT THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

The two white lions of the library
Who guard by night and day the doors
that lead
Into the house where beauty waits our
need;
Who guard — and know not to what end,
for whom —
All the world's wisdom in a narrow room —
The two white lions of the library
Look out and wonder at the thing they see;
They who have known but students, shabby,
lone;
They who have known
But poets, eager, tense, with a rapt air

The Drums in Our Street

Looking beyond the gray crowds, and the
white
Great doors, to a far perfect goal somewhere ;
Women, alight
With thanks, for the holiday from little cares
That in this house is theirs :
And old, calm men, who find no better thing
In life, than a dead book's companioning
When all else fails ;
And children, coming to read fairy-tales ;
And all the weary ones who wish to spend
A piece of life for dreams. . . . It is at an
end,
That tranquil time. And now, all the
strange day,
From those high pedestals where they must
stay,
The two white lions of the library
Look out in wonder at the thing they see.

THE GENEROUS GIVER

We two — and marriage — how absurd it
seems!

Like giving a child a rare and costly vase
To keep among its other toys. We two!
Marriage seemed something made for grave,
wise folk;
Not for us happy wild things, wilful, gay,
And always on a wondrous holiday.

We called upon a friend one day last week;
She was engaged, and showed us all her
linen;
Smooth household things, that made us
slyly look
With deprecating humor at each other.

The Drums in Our Street

We two — and tablecloths! They're not
for us;

We are so far from tablecloths! What
have

We two to do with tablecloths, and with
Guest towels of florid, bulging, fat initials?

She and her man are serious-minded folk.

But we are like two children playing house

Who fill material needs with make-believe.

There are too many magic things in life

To give oneself, a voluntary slave

To serve a house, a table and a chair.

Houses are made to use, to flout and leave

When the road calls and sunsets are abroad,

When the sea calls, and rain is in the wind.

Our marriage is a taking hands and running

Into the sunrise — not a being ruled

By a kind house with disapproving shutters.

The Drums in Our Street

But even so, how strange to think of being
Always together, with no wagging tongues;
But with the world permitting us to kiss!
This mythical and dread and sacred room
Called marriage, where these grown-ups
enter in,
Today they let us, unreprieved, explore,
Two laughing children, curious, wondering.

Though all our work was toward it, all our
dreams,
We two — and marriage — how unreal it
seems!

*To war, who, ere its time, has given youth
Gifts, generously, prematurely kind,
Not ordering impatient youth to wait —
Who, with those bloody hands that deal out
death,
Deals love as well, we give our happy thanks.*

THE GAY LAD DEATH

The gay lad Death
Takes stride for stride
With the marching men
He walks beside.

As their shoulders touch,
In the bitter weather
Death and our own lads
March together.

The gay lad Death —
He sings to the men;
And each man's thoughts
Turn back again

To his own small house,
To his own far town;

The Drums in Our Street

To the girl he loves
In her Sunday gown.

The words they said
That hurt us sore
In the years of peace,
They are sorry for.

The gay lad sings.
He sang on the day,
(O the memories!)
When they went away.

It was he when they left,
(O the marching feet!)
Who put in their kiss
So much of sweet.

The gay lad Death
Is very kind:

The Drums in Our Street

He makes pictures
In their mind

On the elm by the porch
And the rug by the chair,
Of the shine of the lamplight
In our hair.

The gay lad Death,
Of this, of this,
He makes his song,
And of that last kiss.

We women have much
To thank him for.
He sings to the men
As they march to war —

The Drums in Our Street

With a lad's voice sweet
And tremulous.
It is he who makes them
Think of us.

RICHARD LOVELACE AND RICHARD
SMITH

Lucasta, on the day when he left you, to go
to the wars,

Your sweetheart, Richard Lovelace,
Did your heart beat chokingly, when he
whispered those words to you?

Were the quick tears tangling your lashes,
And blinding your terror-stricken eyes, when
he said,

“Tell me not, Sweet, I am unkind
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind,
To war and arms I fly.

“True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field;

The Drums in Our Street

And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

“Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
Loved I not Honor more.”

Yesterday, when Dick Smith, who grew up
next door to me, went to the front,
He did not bend down from a jeweled
saddle
To take the last kiss;
He leaned out from a window in the day
coach,
Crowding past pushing heads and khaki
shoulders,
And kissed me,
And, over the noise of frantic farewells
trampling each other, he shouted :

The Drums in Our Street

“So long, kiddie! Be good to yourself!
I won't come back
Till we've hanged the kaiser
To one of his own linden trees!”

He didn't say it as poetically as *your* Richard
did,
But he meant exactly the same thing.

A GIRLS' WAR SEWING CLASS

My three brothers have taken train
To make the mad world safe again.

My three brothers have kissed our mother
(A son is more to lose than a brother)

And given their sweethearts one bright
glance

And gone to France, and gone to France ;

And with them one who, I knew well,
Loved me, but was too shy to tell.

Now there is war like a shroud of black
Over the world. And Spring comes back,

The Drums in Our Street

And makes our hearts beat uselessly,
Mine and theirs who sew with me.

What use now to be young and fair —
And new grass under the plum trees there?

What use now our round breasts swelling?
There are no love words for telling,

Only words for speaking of battles.
A gust comes swift and the window rattles

And each girl starts, as she heard the sound
Of a bullet pushing a man to the ground.

What use now at dusk to be waiting?
There are no youths for our mating.

What use crocuses in the meadow?
We walk under the shroud's black shadow.

The Drums in Our Street

In our street the spring wind blowing,
Hurt at our silence, all unknowing,

Wonders why we do not answer.
April sways to us, the dancer,

Never guessing why no more
We listen for her foot on the floor.

Where girls' voices used to mingle
In a light and merry jingle

With a youth's hoarse grumbling tone,
In our town one hears alone,

All its length from street to street,
Only women's voices sweet.

What use now to be wild and eager?
Pain is common, cheer is meager;

The Drums in Our Street

Heartbreak is no luxury,
Rich and poor its look may see.

What use now for Spring to come peering
In our window, calling, jeering?

We sit and sew, in a girl's soft din,
Things for our loves to lie wounded in.

We cut and shape and sew and baste
Smiling, with no courage to waste,

And over the hills new grass comes fine
As a baby's hair in the soft sunshine.

On a bough by the window buds grow fat,
It breaks our hearts to look at that.

The window wears a long black shawl,
But we have never had love at all.

The Drums in Our Street

There is woe in the eyes of the soldier's
 bride,

But she had a man to lie beside

For five sweet nights, and she has a ring
And a shaken kiss for remembering.

But we at the threshold cannot see,
We only wonder what Life may be,

We who have not yet known the way
Love and April burn and sway

And lift their victims then once more
Into life — we have no store

Of memories to torture and
Heal with the same careless hand.

Only little memories of
The awkward overtures of love,

The Drums in Our Street

The first strange word, and wistful glance
That make a girl's heart cower and dance.

Now, we must forget until
The war is done and the world is still.

It is we who keep the ceaseless round;
For Life is a clock that must be wound.

We could bear each heavy thing,
If there were no Spring, no Spring!

We could ply our needle and thread
Calmly, if each bird were dead,

But Spring's cruelty heaps the measure,
And we must watch the young sun's pleasure
ure

In the hungry earth. I think
Violets are on the brink

The Drums in Our Street

Of the churchyard hill. I see
One red flower on an apple tree.

And the wind comes shyly, sweet
Home, still laughing, to our street.

While we sit and sew, through chatter and
 din,
Things for our loves to be dying in.

TENEMENT WINDOWS

The hawker brings geraniums,
And stands beneath the windows;
High up in the tenements they hear his cry,
 “Geraniums, geraniums!
 Red and white geraniums!
 Pink and fresh geraniums!”
They straggle down to buy.

The hawker brings geraniums:
He pulls his cart up closer;
The windows in the dull slum street are
crowded, black.
 “Geraniums, geraniums!
 Red and white geraniums!
 The hawker brings geraniums,”
And spring's come back.

The Drums in Our Street

The hawker brings geraniums.

He's brought them many Aprils,
But never have they blossomed where such
strange companions are:

Geraniums, geraniums,

They'll grace the unwashed windows
Beside a dingy service flag that has a dusty
star!

THE WAR BULLETIN

Not ink, but blood — so they,
The bulletins, are made — each word, each
line,
Each letter in the lists —. One sudden day
Last week, of which I do not like to think,
It was your heart's blood made the ink.
Today — God keep me silent — it was mine.

THE BIRDS BETWEEN THE
TRENCHES

The birds between the trenches
Look down on death and sing
As blithely as they might have done
In western fields in Spring.

They lavish all their treasure,
Nor save a single tune.
They know the ears that hear them
Will hear no bird notes soon —

A CALIFORNIAN IN FRANCE

Here in the trench's damp and cold,
I think of my own land's blue and gold.

Blue, blue, April blue —
A drift of white, and a rift of blue,
A dream of white, and a gleam of blue,
Blue, blue, blue!

Gold, gold, poppies' gold,
A flare of gold, and a glare of gold,
A hint of green, and a glint of gold,
Gold, gold, gold!

When this war is over, then
Poppies I shall tread again.

The Drums in Our Street

See in the old careless way
Blue of sky and blue of bay.

Only Death's threat'ning hand can open
eyes
To beauty in familiar hills and skies.

A SONG OF SEVERAL YOUNG MEN

“I’m having the time of my life,”
He writes, “Don’t worry for me.”
For it took danger and strife
To make him free.

War gave him the freedom and friends
That poverty cheated him of.
Shells, do not drop near his post!
Bullets, fly safely above!

There’s a long line of men for your prey;
There are men who have lived more, to
hit.

He has found his youth now. Shrapnel,
guns,
Let him enjoy it a bit.

RED SUNDAY

IN THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Between the singing multitudes
The crimson coffins slowly sway,
As through strange streets the newly slain
Take their triumphant way.

These scarce-cold hands beneath the red
Of protest and of passion, now
Have been fulfilling many a dead
Man's century-old vow.

And while the singing thousands throng
And watch the mighty dead go by,
Beneath the pall the silent mouths
Join in the joyous cry.

The Drums in Our Street

When heroes are borne past our eyes

Who reached and righted twisted years,

In this their righteous victory

How is there time for tears?

The crimson coffins proud go by

With songs on either hand.

With this red coin a people buy

New life for an old land.

MY CHUM

I'm not his sweetheart, God, I'm just his
chum,

We hadn't got as far as loving yet.

We're both so young. If fighting had not
come

So soon. — But then it did, and now he's
there

In France. And I'm here making you
this prayer

To put with those his mother's sending you.

(Perhaps she wouldn't like it if she knew.)

Guard him, and, God, don't let him quite
forget.

His mother wouldn't like it if she knew,

Or mine, if she should ever chance to guess

The Drums in Our Street

I'm speaking of him every night to you.

They'd say we're quite too young to
understand.

But that day, when he went, he took my
hand

And while they talked, he asked me with
his eyes.

I answered too. Perhaps it wasn't wise.

And something made the handshake a
caress.

And still I wear my hair down in a braid

And study Algebra. His letters come;

I open each half hoping, half afraid;

But there is never any reason why

The rest mayn't have them just as soon
as I.

Still, though the family reads them, never
seeing

The Drums in Our Street

Between the lines, I know! and can't help
being
Proud, proud! God, keep him safe today
— My Chum.

THE LITTLE TRAIL TO DEATH

There's a trail up the mountain, there's a
trail to the lake;

There's a trail to the deep woods I long
today to take

Where the wind goes, and the ferns stand,
and the pine needles red

Make a low, soft pillow for a man's tired
head.

There's a trail up the hillside, there's a trail
to the glade,

Where the trout swim slow in the calm, cool
shade

Of the still pool. And the trees hide, in
their sea-swaying boughs,

The Drums in Our Street

A bird's hope, and a bird's fears, and a
bird's brown house.

There's a trail to the lakeside, there's a
trail to the hill .

Where the moss holds the footprints, and
the high ferns are still,

Where the beech stands, and the pine towers,
and the water maples take

The color from the sunset, and where alders
shake.

There's a trail to the seaside, there's a trail
to the hill

There are trails to the world's end I long to
follow still.

—But here as in a trench I watch; before
new dawns shall break,

It may be it's the little trail to death that
I will take.



WOUNDED RED CROSS NURSE

Little white body of mine, so broken,
Little white body that tried to be brave,
Lying, without any thought or emotion,
On a long bed like a grave,

On a long hospital cot in the stillness ;
Supple soft body, all bandaged and strange,
How you have run in the sun on the hillside,
Raced on the range !

How you have danced with the leaves in
the forest,
Where with the other swift nymphs you
belong !

The Drums in Our Street

Joyous, wild body, I mourn for your still-
ness —

You that were song,

When out of the swathings, grotesque and
uncomely,

I smile as the men I have nursed so long,
do,

As my drowsy eyes gaze down the mounds
and the hillocks

And the folds in the sheets that are you.

I am too weak now to fear or be grieving ;
That will come later, and tears for you then,
Little white body, who cannot believe yet
You will never be dancing again.

PART II

THE DRUMS IN OUR SQUARE

THE DRUMS IN OUR SQUARE

High dreams fill all the dusk-hung air,
We all are dreamers in our Square :
We put a word upon a word,
Like children's blocks to make a tower,
To make a tower where we may stand
And snatch at heaven with our hand ;
Or we put color carelessly
On color, and their hearts are stirred,
These careless others', for an hour.

We all are dreamers in our Square ;
There is no sound but laughter there.
We win to gladness, win to mirth,
We are the glad ones of the earth,
Because the thing we dream, we do ;

The Drums in Our Street

All men dream dreams, our dreams are true :
For the work we love our hands are free.
We, too, create, and are deity.

But what is this sound today that comes?
Here in our Square — the Drums, the Drums?

LAST NIGHT

Last night they all were in our studio
Drinking a little from the common cup
Of hope, Bob said, he writes that kind of
 verse,
The kind that's made of words, the other
 kind
Is made of feelings, with words put up like
 screens
To hide them but to let us know they're
 there.

They drank a toast to you and me, and to
Our happiness. They drank it standing,
 and

The Drums in Our Street

You made a speech, pride shining from your
eyes

And joy, because you'd made me care for
you.

And I sat by, and laughed, and was happy
too.

"She's like a kitten, little and comforting,
Contented playing with a spool and string,"
Said Bobby, "she's the happiest thing, I'll
swear,

In all New York!" Bill said, "Or any-
where."

It was so true of me, I couldn't speak.
They laughed to see the red come in my
cheek.

The Drums in Our Street

And then the talk went drifting out among
The floating flotsam-jetsam of the Square;
Who'd fallen in love with whom, and who'd
 been where;

And Torwald's picture that had just been
 hung,

And what the publishers had wanted for
Jem's book, — and then they talked about
 the war.

— Last night they all were in our studio
And talked about the war — how could I
 know

That ere another night, you'd have to go!

ENLISTED

Two weeks with you — two crazy weeks
Of joy at being alive, and being
Everything to each other, freeing
Each other from the bonds that hold
The spirit in from being bold
And ranging heaven unafraid.
For two wild, holy, reckless weeks
We laughed together — then war speaks.

War speaks, and calls your name, and you
Lift your head and are listening,
Loose my arms from your neck that cling,
And with all the ragged and reckless crew
Of the artists and poets and dreamers we knew
Down the long street you are marching —
you!

The Drums in Our Street

And I who have never learned to see
Your coat and hat on the old hall tree,
Your tangling ties on my dresser here,
Your strange huge boots by my little shoes
Without a shamed and proud confusion.
I must see these now, and be stabbed anew
By each thing that ever was worn by you.

I must hear the hurdy gurdy's groan
Outside of our window, and stand alone
And listen to all the tunes you know
Where I stood with you a week ago.
And every night again I must face
The others without you, chatting gay
At the artists' little eating-place.
How can I live these long hours through?
Day after endless aching day?

But oh, I am proud, am proud of you!

THE BROKEN PROMISE

You and I touched each other's hands
And stood listening.
Life promised us so much,
Bent low and whispered,
And promised us so much.
Then war
Put his large, stubby hand
Over her mouth
And drew her head back
Before she had quite finished promising;
War has forced her to her knees
And her eyes have fear in them,
But you and I do not think of her danger.
We only grieve
Because now she cannot give us
Those wonderful things
Of which she whispered in our ears.

A GREENWICH VILLAGE TEA ROOM

The dingy basement restaurant
Where the artists used to come —

The little smoky room
Where the artists sat
Blowing dreams from their cigarettes,
Shaping them with their lips
And watching them rise and die with equal
languor —

The little smoky room
That has known tragedies
In many young men's eyes,
Has seen births,
And deaths —

The Drums in Our Street

The little smoky room
Is empty now —

On a spring night,
War sauntered into it
Casually,
And the young men linked their arms in
his,
And marched out through the door
Singing, and laughing, and jesting with their
new comrade.

AT THE GRAND CENTRAL STATION

I smiled as I said good-by — you knew
As you watched my face, it was hard to do.

You helped me laugh, you helped me jest,
Till the big clock called, and you went with
the rest.

Then I turned away, and jostled the others,
Sisters of soldiers, sweethearts, mothers,

Fathers of sailors, friends they'd known.
And I walked home, alone, alone.

And the station was empty, and all the
street.

The Drums in Our Street

And I passed the place where we used to
meet.

And the town was empty, and full of gloom ;
And the Square was empty — and oh, our
room !

“ANYTHING YOU WANT”

“— Anything you want” — those were his words,

“Buy anything you want, dear” — and that look,

The look of some one's father, in his eyes,
The look of giving playthings to a child —
I cannot quite forget his words, his look.

“Buy anything you want” — his train was gone

And I left standing by the station door,
Alone with the five dollars in my hand.
I, only, knew how hard he must have tried,

To save that folded bill, from needful things,
For me to buy a trinket with. He knew

The Drums in Our Street

So well, the way I loved a bit to spend
For foolish things I never should have craved.
“Buy anything you want” — the train was
gone.

Those words — the last he said to me on
earth,
So like him always — “Anything you
want.”

Today the notice came that he was dead,
My husband-lover. Dead — my own, my
own.

And ever since, the traffic in the street
In all its magic rhythm seems to taunt
And stab me, like a well-loved song repeat
Those words. I walk alone, unheeded,
home;
And dusk comes gayly. — “Anything you
want” —

A SOLDIER'S WIFE

I looked out through the window to the
street

The lights made silver and the rain made
black,

To see at last if you were coming back.

But there were only other people there,

Not you, not you! My eyes searched
everywhere,

But no one's shoulders had that reckless
swing

And no one's hat was tilted quite so much

Too far. The dusk had laid its wistful
touch

Upon each tree within the little park.

It is hard to be alone when it grows dark

The Drums in Our Street

On the first, strange, wild days of any
Spring.

Spring is a pitiless season — gay and sweet
But very pitiless. — I saw a pair

Of lovers walking, speaking, unaware

That some one at a window up above

Was hating them because they were in love.

And there were soldiers passing, proud to be

Soldiers, and not unwilling we should see.

A girl went rushing by, with something
warm

In her smiling, and with books beneath
her arm,

A group of small boys loitered past, and
then

In eager, confidential chat, two men;

Then some one disappointed and alone,

Whose business hadn't gone the way it
should.

The Drums in Our Street

The secrets shoulders tell! when if we could
We would silence them as firmly as we do
Our mouths and eyes. How wary mine
have grown!

Then came two shoppers, in their high tense
jargon

Each boasting to the other of a bargain;
Then others; women, men, a child or two;
A poet with his hat off, striding out
Against the world, his every step a shout;
And people in the distance, who, I knew
Were people, but who seemed like blurs of
blue.

I looked out, out, to where the lights and
rain

Were putting silver on the street, and black,
To see at last if you were coming back
Who never can come back to me again.

The Drums in Our Street

But as I stood alone, and watched for you
With bitterness and pain — before I knew,
The bitterness and grieving all were gone.
The Spring wind touched me. I looked
 down upon
The little tragedies of shoulder, and
Slow feet, tired head, and languid, listless
 hand;
The little comedies of bird-like, fleeting
Quick glances, and of glad eyes boldly
 meeting.
You fought that these young things today
 might sate
Their thirst for Spring, might laugh, and
 weep and mate.
That all might still go on like this, you
 died.
To save their youth, your youth was cruci-
 fied.

The Drums in Our Street

Because of this you shall forever after
Be one with love and youth and joy and
laughter.

Because of this you still in all that meet
Shall smile and touch and speak within this
street.

Love in my eyes, I looked again, and knew
In all who pass, there is a part of you.
And now each night I lean out, out, and see
Once more, my lover coming home to me.

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